EDLD 5301 Reflective Practice - Week 1

From the Discussion Board:

Amy asked the question, “How do we make PLCs more effective on our campus using action inquiry?”

In *Leading with passion and knowledge: The principal as action Researcher*, Dana discusses the importance of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Professional Learning Communities are very beneficial to my campus. The non-CILT members have an opportunity to collaborate and demonstrate their leadership capabilities. The PLCs become continuous action inquiry sessions where the entire campus can feel engaged and gain ownership on the outcomes of best practices and research. I want my campus to engage in an action inquiry on how to make PLCs more effective on our campus.

“Remember, having a shared vision is foundational before genuine school improvement can occur” (Combs, 2010, p. 4). I would like my campus to focus on the shared vision of improving our PLCs. I think improvement in PLCs will assist my campus on other action inquiry topics.

Joyce replied to Amy saying that, our district has PLC time incorporated during the school day for every teacher in addition to their planning period. In observing the core subject PLCs over the past five years, I have noticed a major difference in the effectiveness of the PLCs. The two PLCs I had direct knowledge and interaction were Biology and Chemistry as they met in the classroom beside mine. All teachers had the same training, read the same books, had the same instruction guides and support of the same supervisor; however, the two groups could not be more different. One worked as a well oiled machine. They arrived on time and were prepared for the time they had together. There was an agenda for both the week and individual days. The students' achievement in these classes rose over 20 percentage points over the course of the school year based on pre- and post testing completed.   
  
In contrast, the second group could not get their act together. Many of the teachers used this time to work on lesson plans, grading assignments or other "errands." The teachers in the group would look at the same data being collected and each had an explanation on why the students were not performing, usually putting the blame on "lazy students." Their solution for improving student scores was to work the students already successful and leave the other behind.  
  
Why there is such a difference between the PLCs would be an interesting inquiry, as well as, how to improve the effectiveness of the second group.

I replied that I agreed with Amy that PLCs could potentially be very beneficial on campuses. But I also read Joyce's comment about the two PLCs that met on her campus. She commented that one ran like a "well-oiled" machine and the other had difficulty getting to their focus each meeting. I agree that it could be a great action inquiry to find out why one worked well and the other not as well. Focusing on these items, it is obvious that we all have so many responsibilities placed on us. They range from lesson plans and grading to parent conferences/calls and student mentoring. It stretches us all really thin sometimes. A possible solution could be to delegate the group leader position each time and rotate this responsibility among the group members. This "leader" could be in charge of the agenda for that meeting period so more gets accomplished each time. Each person would have a shared ownership in the mission of the group. I agree with you that this focus on your campus would be a great action inquiry topic.

Genevieve asked an interesting question: How can we motivate high school students to want to learn? It appears some students do not care about their education. I would love to be a student in this day and age where we literally have the world at our fingertips because of technology and the internet. The students seem to be so lazy and do not want to put effort forth in their classes, even in computer classes. Sometimes I feel that we are not preparing them for college. It really bothers me when I have to constantly encourage them to complete their work so the students will have a grade instead of a zero. I think a big factor is that I am a digital immigrant and they are digital natives. Students today do not know what it was like to not have technology available to them. They have always had access to it. An action research study would be beneficial to find out what it will take the students to get interested in their own learning and encourage them to want to learn as much as possible.

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| I replied that I think that high school student motivation would be an effective action research study and it would be beneficial to find out what it might take to get these students interested in their own learning. You are correct when you say it seems they have the world at their fingertips with technology and the internet. When thinking about this topic, it brought to mind the career assessment that is mandatory for all 8th graders to take in our district. When they do the required career assessments, it really gets my 8th grade students thinking about career options and what they might do with their future. They begin talking about colleges and about possible careers. It might be good to 'plant the seed' earlier and get our students thinking about their future in 8th grade before they reach high school. This career assessment is complete with videos about career options, colleges, and possible majors that might be suitable for them based on their assessment results. |

Fichman, Nancy Dana (2009). *Leading with passion and knowledge: The Principal as Action Researcher.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Harris, S., Edmonson, S., and Combs, J. (2010)*. Examining What We Do to Improve OurSschools: 8 Steps to Improve Our Schools.* Eye on Education Press.